

## STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION – TOPIC SUMMARY

**Topic:** Modified Diploma Reporting

**Date:** August 21, 2014

**Staff/Office:** Doug Kosty, Jon Wiens, and Sarah Drinkwater, Office of Learning

**Action Requested:**  Informational Only  Adoption Later  Adoption  Adoption/Consent  
Agenda

### ISSUE BEFORE THE BOARD:

To present the State Board of Education an informational update regarding changes in how modified diplomas will count in the graduation rate based on recent guidance from the U.S. Department of Education. .

### BACKGROUND:

Oregon’s Modified Diploma is available to students “who have demonstrated the inability to meet the full set of academic content standards for a regular high school diploma, even with reasonable modifications and accommodations” (OAR 581-022-1134). Students who earn modified diplomas have been counted as non-graduates in Oregon’s four- and five-year cohort graduation rate calculations. Approximately 750 students receive a modified diploma each year.

However, the Modified diploma does denote successful completion of required coursework and specific achievement on statewide assessments, including:

- 24 units of credits
  - English Language arts - 3
  - Mathematics – 2
  - Science – 2
  - Social Sciences – 2
  - Health Education – 1
  - Physical Education – 1
  - Career and Technical Education, The Arts, or Second Languages - 1
- Demonstration of essential skills
  - May be met through modified assessment options

In 2009, Oregon received guidance from the U.S. Department of Education indicating students who earned Oregon’s Modified and Extended Diplomas were not eligible for federal financial aid. However, recent guidance from and discussions with the US Department of Education have clarified the eligibility requirements. A student must receive ‘the recognized equivalent of a high school diploma’, and the Oregon Department of Education has determined that Oregon’s Modified Diploma meets this requirement.

Oregon received further clarification this year from the U.S. Department of Education regarding requirements for federal financial aid eligibility. Oregon students who receive a modified diploma are now eligible to apply for federal financial aid, however, Oregon students who receive an extended diploma are not eligible to apply for federal financial aid.

The Modified Diploma denotes successful completion of required courses and specific achievement on state assessments. Oregon students who receive a Modified Diploma are now eligible to apply for federal financial aid. This extends to students who may have received a Modified Diploma in past years. Whether it is prudent for an eligible student to seek federal financial aid is a determination that should be made on a case-by-case basis by a student and his or her family in consultation with a financial aid advisor. Factors that should be taken into consideration include the amount of borrowing involved, if any, and the student's expected ability to repay. Approximately 750 students receive a modified diploma each year.

#### **ISSUE OVERVIEW:**

Since federal guidance allows a state to decide which diploma options qualify a student for federal financial aid and this determination should be consistent with the state's determination regarding its treatment of the diploma for reporting purposes for the graduation rate, the department is recommending modified diplomas be used in the graduation rate calculation for school year 2013-14.